

Washington, D.C. – Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) issued the following statement commending the administration for meeting its June refugee acceptance target:

“I am pleased that this administration has, for the first time, met its monthly target for admitting Iraqi refugees,” said Rep. Blumenauer. “Last December, I worked to set a firm goal of 12,000 refugees that were to be admitted to the U.S. I urge the Bush administration to hold firm to this number as a minimum and do even more to help. With more than four million Iraqis displaced from their homes as a result of the Iraq war, we must meet our obligation to the Iraqi people and to the thousands of Iraqis who have helped us.”

The State Department announced today that it 1,721 Iraqi refugees were admitted into the U.S. last month, up from 1,141 in May. This is the first time since 2003 that the administration's target of 1,000 per month mark had been surpassed.

In May of 2007, Congressman Blumenauer introduced the “Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act,” H.R.2265, which provides assistance to Iraqi refugees, particularly those whose lives are believed to be threatened for assisting United States troops in Iraq. Amnesty International, the International Rescue Committee, Refugees International and Church World Service have all endorsed the legislation.

In January of 2008, the President signed into law the Department of Defense Authorization Act, which included provisions from the “Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act.” The provisions provide 5,000 special immigrant visas for the next five years, require the Secretary of State to establish a refugee processing program in Iraq and other countries in the region, and direct the Secretary of State to designate a special coordinator at the Embassy in Baghdad.